

PIP Benchmark: Implement strategies to engage fathers and youth.

PIP item: 1A.2.3 Evaluate current training components, related to fathers and youth, in both worker and foster parent trainings, revise as necessary integrating the resource guide as appropriate.

As most Child Welfare trainings across the county, Kentucky knows that father's and youth are subsets of the family dynamics included throughout all trainings. However, in 2005, Kentucky realized our weakness of working with birth fathers especially when they were not living in the home. At that point, we made strides to improve our training to help influence the work around this topic. Below are specific curricula that focus on birth fathers:

P&P Academy, Course 1, Case Planning- Participants discuss how objectives and/or tasks are written on the Case Plan when the father does not live in the home or are absent in the case. Our improved efforts in finding absent parents in general have helped case workers involve fathers more in the case planning process as well.

Also in the Case Planning section of training, we discuss attachment of children to their parents and characteristics workers should look for to assess these attachments. One case scenario specifically uses a child who is more connected to his father than his mother. This clearly challenges the cultural basis of some that the mother is always the most nurturing caregiver.

P&P Academy, Course 1, Ongoing Services- As part of this course, the handout "Tip sheet for Involving Fathers" case workers asked to select 5 alternative ways to work closer with birth father's on each case. The topic is discussed both in In-home Support and OOH Support for Families and Children. Workers are then asked to develop a task statement that describes what they will do differently to Involve Fathers, Support Family and Siblings.

Enhancing Safety and Permanency- This course emphasizes the importance of the child's attachments to as many people as possible including the birth father and the birth father's family. The philosophy is woven throughout the course regardless of permanency plan. For example, even in cases with a termination of parental rights, workers are asked to share positive characteristics of the birth father; such as his occupation, physical attributes and personality traits.

Introduction to Judicial Proceedings- While this course focuses on the judicial system rather than the dynamics of the family it does discuss the rights of the father, even the unwed father of the child regardless of the father's involvement in the case previously.

In our curricula, we discuss all age ranges of children in the system from birth to 18. This is beneficial for our generic teams across most of the state of KY. However, some of our regions have specific "Adolescent" and/or "Status" teams. Also we know that this older population does have specific needs. Workers are required to work with our Independent Living Coordinators and are given some training specific to this group. During the P&P Academy, Course 1, in Case Planning- we discuss the Child and Youth Action Objectives. In this segment workers learn about the requirements for 12-15 year olds to receive "soft skills" from their caregivers and these are reflected in those objectives. The 16 and up youth are referred to an Independent Living Coordinator for formal classes. The Objectives and Tasks on the Case Plan/ Child and Youth Action sections are to be specific for that particular youth. During the On-going Services week of Course 1, participants are introduced to the Transition Plan, Extended Commitment and other services for youth in care.

Adolescent Issues- This four-part training course was designed for all child welfare workers who serve the 2200 adolescents ages 12 and over and their families involved with Kentucky's Child Welfare System. This includes youth who are dually committed, status offenders, developmentally challenged, victims of child abuse and neglect and those who have extended their commitment or qualify for additional services beyond their 18th birthdays. Participants develop knowledge and skill sets around today's youth, adolescent development, systems and their impact, assessment skills and tools, ongoing services, case planning, transition plans and case closure. The goal is to enhance permanency and well being while maintaining Kentucky's Public Child Welfare policies and guidelines. Best practice is utilized to develop effective interventions for this population. Although this is not a mandatory course, many workers whose case load consists mostly of older youth do take advantage of this class.

The Fathers and Families resource directory and Youth resource directory is currently being incorporated into all aspects of the Protection and Permanency training.